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WELLNESS *for* WOMEN

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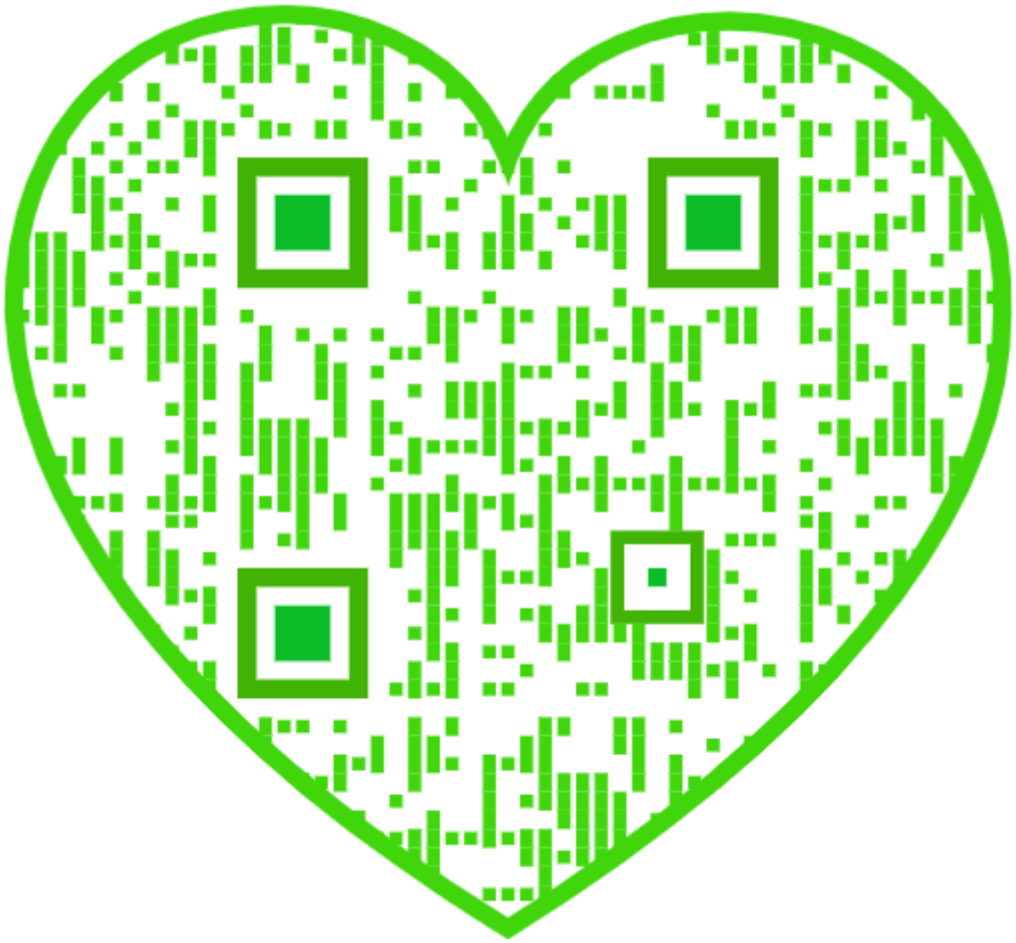

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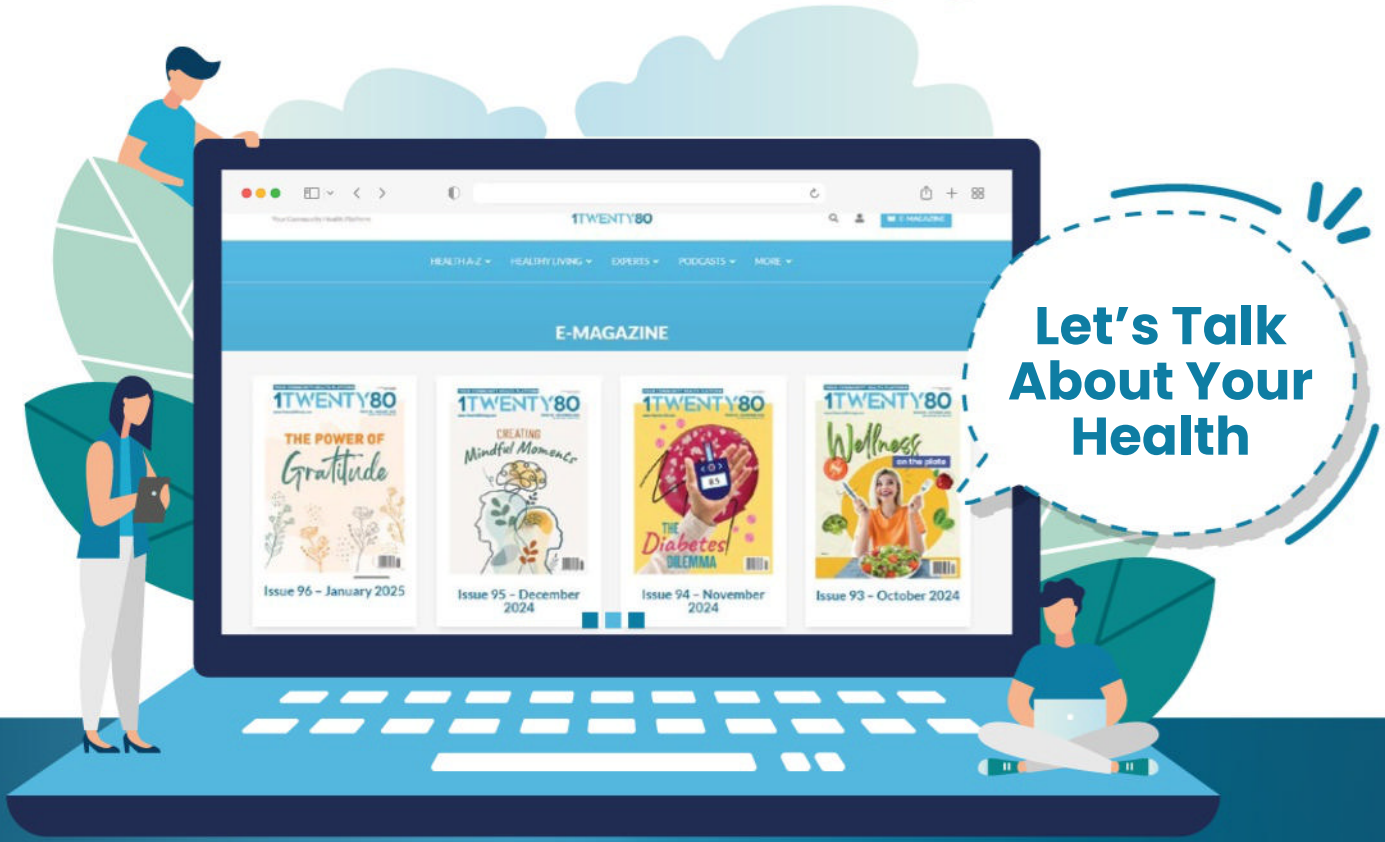

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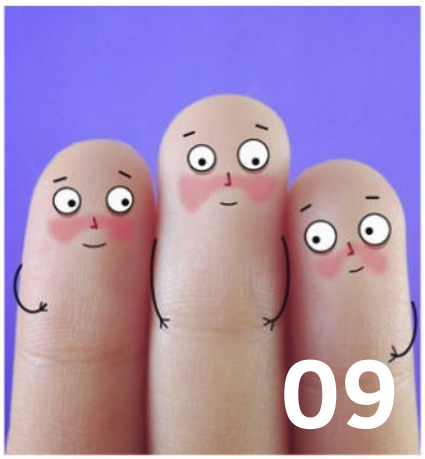
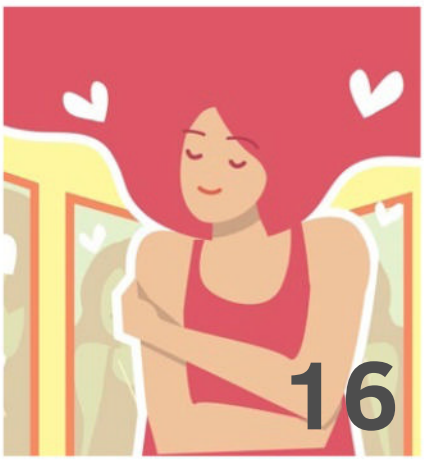
CONTENTS





08. _____
WELLNESS
Reflecting on the year gone by, let's celebrate your wellness wins and welcome more of them in 2025!

09. _____
LIFE WITH LUPUS – A WOMAN'S PERSPECTIVE
Navigating life with resilience and self-compassion through chronic illness

12. _____
THE DISMISSAL OF WOMEN'S STRESS
Gender bias in healthcare—a harsh reality in the 21st century

16. _____
THE SCIENCE OF SELF-ESTEEM
Discover the factors that affect how you see yourself

20. _____
PROSTATE MATTERS
Unpacking Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia with insights from a urology expert

26. _____
BEYOND PILLS & PRESCRIPTIONS
In this personal interview, a pharmacist opens up about their journey, challenges, and advice for aspiring pharmacists

30. _____
DEBUNKING COMMON MYTHS ABOUT CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE (CKD): A DEEPER LOOK INTO KIDNEY HEALTH IN MALAYSIA

34. _____
WHO'S GOT A FRIEND IN ME?
Understanding toxic friendship and finding your way

38. _____
UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN INFLUENZA, COMMON COLD, AND HMPV
Stay informed about flu, cold, and HMPV symptoms, treatment, and prevention

40. _____
STYLE
Strong, steady, and effortlessly graceful—why Pilates is the workout of the moment

42. _____
FOOD
Lemongrass: More than just a kitchen staple!

44. _____
BEAUTY SLEEP
Discover how a good night's sleep can work wonders for your skin

48. _____
RAMADAN DELIGHTS
Sweet and savory, these easy-to-make Ramadan recipes offer the perfect balance of flavour and nutrition for *Iftar* and *Suhoor* meals

EDITOR'S NOTE

Take a moment for yourself, dive in, and know that we're all in this together, supporting one another on the path to health and happiness."

In this month's issue, we're diving into some really important topics around *women, health, wellness, and confidence*—things that matter to all of us. Whether you're managing your own health or supporting a loved one, these articles are here to inform and inspire.

In our feature story, we're taking a closer look at *Lupus*, an autoimmune disease that affects a significant number of women but can impact anyone. Our article breaks down the reality of the medical condition through the eyes of a patient. We want to help raise awareness and provide support for those dealing with this condition.

Next, we're tackling *stress*—something we all know too well. Between work, family, and everything in between, stress can really take a toll on women. Our article gives you simple, effective strategies to help manage stress and find moments of calm in the chaos. No matter who you are, finding balance is key to maintaining your well-being.

We're excited to bring you these articles and hope they offer valuable insights that you can take with you in your everyday life. Take a moment for yourself, dive in, and know that we're all in this together, supporting one another on the path to health and happiness.

On a seperate note, there is an announcement I would like to make. There will be a significant change in our publishing schedule! Starting this year, our magazine will be transitioning to a twice-a-year print cycle, moving away from our previous monthly format. This decision comes as we focus on delivering even higher-quality content, taking more time to curate insightful stories, stunning visuals, and in-depth features for you, our dedicated readers.

While this marks a shift in frequency, we remain committed to bringing you the best in every issue. We're confident that this change will allow us to explore new ideas, themes, and partnerships in a more thoughtful way, ensuring each publication is something truly special.

Thank you for your continued support, and we look forward to sharing our next issue with you soon.

Edeline

ARE YOU AT RISK FOR "SILENT KILLER" DISEASE?

Chronic kidney disease is a silent killer that affected 15.48% of the population in 2018 and it continues to be a public health concern in Malaysia.*

A Nutritional Formula for Stage 1 - Stage 4 Predialysis Patients

Stages of Chronic Kidney Disease		
Stage	Description of kidney function	GFR
1	Normal or high	≥ 90
2	Mildly decreased	60-89
3a	Mildly to moderately decreased	45-59
3b	Moderately to severely decreased	30-44
4	Severely decreased	15-29
5	Kidney failure	<15

(Source: Kidney Disease Improving Global Outcome)

Consult your doctor today to know more!

*Chronic kidney disease taking a growing toll in Malaysia. www.thesundaily.my. (2022, March 10). Retrieved July 6, 2022, from https://www.thesundaily.my/local/chronic-kidney-disease-taking-a-growing-toll-in-malaysia-BK8936751
*(2020). KDIGO 2020 Clinical Practice Guideline for Diabetes Management in Chronic Kidney Disease. Kidney International, 98(4), S1–S115. doi:10.1016/j.kint.2020.06.019
*Saminathan, TA, Hooi, LS, Mohd Yusoff, M et al. 2020, 'Prevalence of chronic kidney disease and its associated factors in Malaysia; findings from a nationwide population-based cross-sectional study', BMC Nephrol 21, 344.

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SYMPHONY NUTRACEUTICALS

Your Wellness Recap

Reflecting on the year gone by, let's celebrate your wellness wins and welcome more of them in 2025!

By Siti Salihah

From 'bed rotting' to digital detox, we've all experienced our fair share of health epiphanies this year.

As we took stock of our health, many of us found new ways to prioritise mental well-being, from more open conversations about mental health to creating better work-life balance. Alongside this, trends like mindful eating, prioritising sleep, and fostering meaningful connections have emerged as guiding principles for living better. These shifts—cultural movements, if you will—have led us towards more intentional and holistic ways of caring for ourselves.

Shift in perspective

We've also seen more people taking their health into their own hands, shifting the focus from quick fixes to lasting lifestyle changes. People are embracing slow mornings, prioritising mental clarity, and finding balance amidst the chaos of daily life. It's no longer just about hitting the gym or eating clean—wellness has become about feeling whole, inside and out. More people are realising that true health isn't about perfection, but about taking small, consistent steps towards better living.

Bingo to a Better You

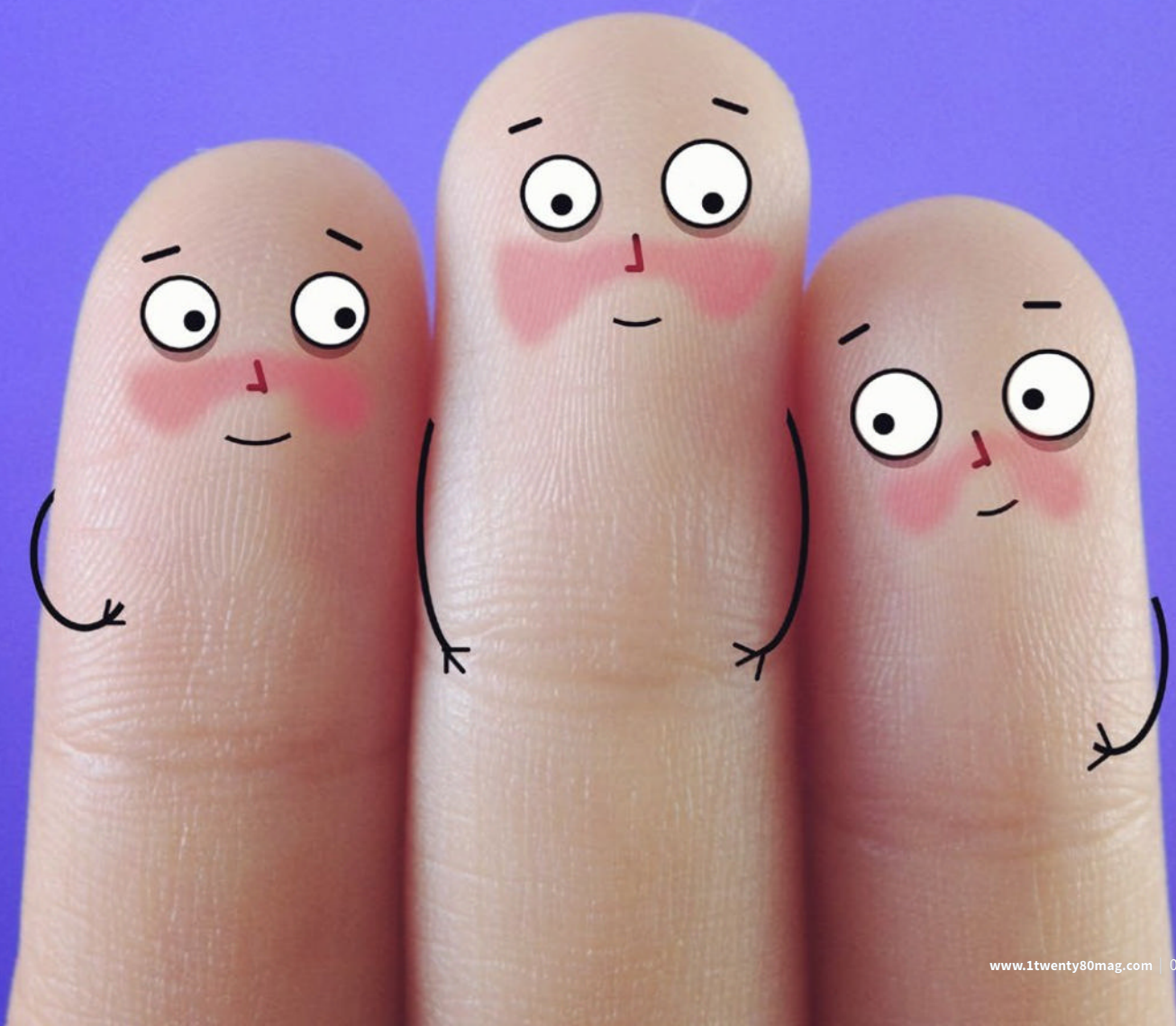
Wellness isn't one-size-fits-all. It's personal, always evolving, and—most importantly—fun. Ready for a quick challenge? Let's dive into this bingo to see what you've intentionally (or unintentionally) ticked off this year—and perhaps find some inspiration for the year ahead!

Went to a party	**Had a do-nothing rest day**	**Caught up with someone you haven't seen in a while**	**Did a good deed for a stranger**	**Wrote affirmations for yourself and said them out loud**
Went on a trip	**Took photos of your loved ones**	**Ate mindfully and nourished your body**	**Visited a park or a garden**	**Engaged in a creative activity like drawing or writing**
Expressed gratitude for someone	**Wrote in a journal**	**Revisited a favourite childhood activity or TV show**	**Had a beach day**	**Helped somebody in need**
Carried a water bottle to drink more water	**Spent an hour doing something you love**	**Donated money, food, clothes, or even blood**	**Tried a new type of workout**	**Went for a checkup: health, eyes, teeth**
Decluttered your living space	**Had a movie night with friends**	**Learned something new**	**Watered a plant**	**Went for a massage**

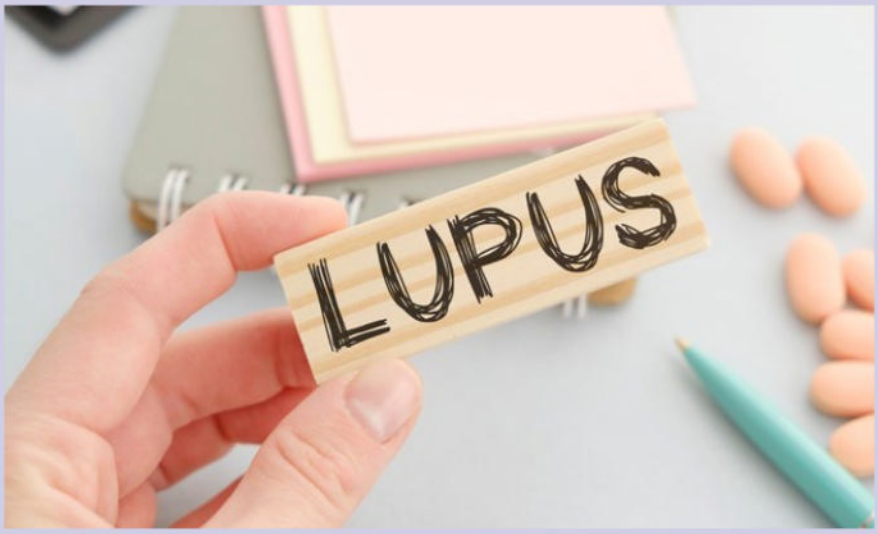
Life with *Lupus* – a Woman's Perspective

Navigating life with resilience and self-compassion through chronic illness

By Siti Salihah



Lupus is one of those conditions that rarely gets talked about, reflecting the all-too-common tendency to overlook or downplay women's pain.



Lupus is an autoimmune disease where the body attacks its own tissues, leading to inflammation, pain, and damage to organs. The thing is, lupus affects 90% of women, typically during their reproductive years. And while the symptoms are unpredictable—sometimes mild, sometimes severe—what stays constant is the fact that women with lupus face unique challenges that extend into their physical health, mental well-being, and sometimes, even their relationships.

One of those women is Sofia, someone I know through work. In her case, it wasn't just about managing her symptoms; it was about finding understanding in a world that often overlooks what it means living with a condition like this.

Diagnosis: A Long Wait

Lupus is notoriously hard to diagnose because its symptoms mimic so many other conditions. Sofia recalls how long it took before doctors finally pinpointed the problem. "It actually took quite a long time to get diagnosed after my symptoms started. It was a tough process since my symptoms were often mistaken for other conditions," she shares. Misdiagnosis and delays are common with lupus, highlighting the importance of persistence when you know something isn't right.

Living with Lupus

If there's one thing I learned from Sofia, it's that living with lupus isn't just about fighting physical symptoms—it's about learning how to adapt and listen to your body; a balancing act. Sofia explains, "I learn how to avoid things that trigger my symptoms, for example stress, certain foods, and definitely too much sun. Sunblock is non-negotiable for me!"

And it's not just physical; lupus takes a toll on your social life too. "I also listen closely to my body and rest when I need to, even if that means skipping

"I learn how to avoid things that trigger my symptoms, for example stress, certain foods, and definitely too much sun. Sunblock is non-negotiable for me!"

plans. Some friends don't always understand why I can't be active," she admits. This is a reality many living with lupus face—balancing the desire to be social with the need to rest, knowing that overexerting yourself today can lead to pain tomorrow. Sofia's advice? "It's all about finding balance and pacing myself."

Support System

For anyone with a chronic illness, a strong support system can make all the difference. For Sofia, it's her partner and family who truly help her stay strong through the ups and downs. "Having a supportive partner and family who truly understand what I'm going through is such a blessing," she says. When you're battling something as unpredictable as lupus, it's easy to feel isolated, especially since others can't always see what you're going through. That's why having people who get it—who can support you emotionally and physically—is vital.

Awareness: More Than Just a Diagnosis

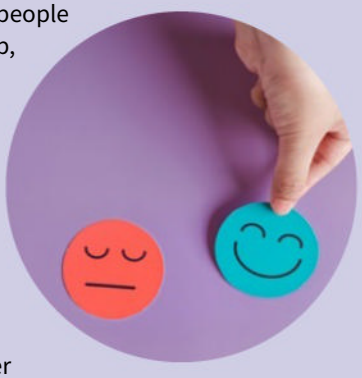
Lupus is often misinterpreted as just another autoimmune condition—one that's not 'serious enough' to warrant attention. But for Sofia, spreading awareness is essential. "Lupus is often misunderstood, and more awareness can lead to better understanding and support for people living with it," she says, emphasizing how crucial it is for society to grasp what lupus entails.

The reality is stark: lupus affects major organs like the skin, kidneys, heart, and lungs, with flare-ups striking unpredictably. For Sofia, greater awareness isn't just about recognition; it's about ensuring no one has to suffer in silence or without adequate support.

Advice for Newly Diagnosed

Sofia's advice for anyone newly diagnosed with lupus is simple yet powerful: practice self-compassion. "Be kind to yourself and take things one step at a time. Rest is not a weakness… it's part of staying strong," she shares.

She also highlights the importance of setting boundaries, which many of us struggle with. "Surround yourself with people who lift you up, and never be afraid to set boundaries to protect your health." Her approach revolves around listening to her body, respecting its limits, and prioritising health over external pressures.



Lastly,, she adds, "And never forget your sunblock! Think of it as your invisible armor." A simple but effective reminder to keep protecting yourself, even when the battle feels invisible to others. ■

The Dismissal of WOMEN'S STRESS

Gender bias in healthcare—a harsh reality in the 21st century

By Siti Salihah

You know the infamous line: "It's just that time of the month, isn't it?"

More often than not, women's feelings are brushed-off as dramatic or 'overly emotional', with their menstrual cycles getting thrown under the bus for every outburst. This flippant dismissal of women's stress and pain carries real consequences. Anxiety and depression are frequently overlooked or written off as mood swings, while autoimmune diseases—chronic and life-altering—go undiagnosed for years because a woman's pain isn't taken seriously.

WHY DOES THIS HAPPEN?

This pattern of sexism isn't new. As far back as 1900 BC, ancient Egyptians had believed that hysteria was caused by the movement of the uterus inside a woman's body. And thanks to brilliant Hippocrates, who coined the term 'hysteria' from the Greek word hysteron (meaning uterus), the idea of 'female hysteria' became entrenched for centuries. The result? Women's pain and mental health struggles continue to be misunderstood and misdiagnosed.

Until today, echoes of this stigma still shape medical opinions. Society expects women to be accustomed to pain—simply because they are biologically built to endure menstrual cramps or childbirth. Research reveals that women's bodies are still under-studied, often due to concerns that fluctuating hormones might affect results or cause disruptions in women of childbearing age. Add to that the historical bias of predominantly male researchers, who assumed male-focused studies are applicable to humankind.

Ironically, women's physical conditions are often dismissed as psychological, while actual mental health struggles are brushed off as "just stress." Instead of proper care, they're told to try yoga or adjust their diet. Worse, women are prescribed opiates twice as often as men—an easy fix that ignores the root causes of their pain. This overmedication has created an opioid gender gap, leaving women trapped in a cycle of misdiagnosis and neglect. Ultimately, sexism in healthcare continues to fail women, both in over- and under-diagnosis of their mental health and physical conditions.

THE WOMEN'S BODY

Women are more susceptible to autoimmune diseases and mental health conditions, and this is deeply tied to their biological makeup. While some aspects of their biology, like hormonal balance, offer protection, others make women more vulnerable in unique ways.

For instance, women's immune systems are generally stronger, helping fight off infections, but this can also backfire. The same strength can cause the immune system to mistakenly attack the body's own tissues, leading to autoimmune diseases. This is partly due to women having two X chromosomes. While these chromosomes offer protection against certain genetic disorders, they also carry genes that can over-activate the immune system.

This is influenced by hormones too, especially estrogen. While estrogen helps boost immunity, it can also overstimulate the immune system, making women more prone to autoimmune conditions. Beyond the immune system, estrogen also affects mood. It can cause emotional ups and downs during your period, pregnancy, or menopause, sometimes leading to anxiety, irritability, or depression.

Other hormones like thyroid hormones, progesterone, and testosterone also affect women's health in different ways. Thyroid hormones regulate energy, progesterone reduces anxiety, and testosterone influences mood and motivation. It's this delicate hormonal balance that makes women more vulnerable to emotional instability and autoimmune diseases.

THE LINK BETWEEN MENTAL HEALTH AND AUTOIMMUNE DISEASES

Mental health challenges and autoimmune diseases often go hand in hand, and for women, these issues can be intertwined in ways that are hard to separate. Hormonal imbalances, stress, and the immune system's response all play a role in both. It's crucial to understand the signs of each, as early diagnosis and treatment can make a significant difference in outcomes. This awareness empowers you to make informed choices and assertive decisions to get yourself checked, even if your concerns are initially dismissed.

Mental Health Conditions

ANXIETY

Symptoms:

- Persistent worry or fear, often disproportionate to the situation.
- Physical symptoms like increased heart rate, sweating, or muscle tension.
- Difficulty relaxing or concentrating.

Anxiety is often dismissed as just stress in women, but it's almost always more than that. If it's interfering with your daily routine, talk to a doctor. Treatment can help regain control, and without it, anxiety can lead to panic attacks or even depression.

DEPRESSION

Symptoms:

- Persistent sadness, emptiness, or hopelessness.
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities once enjoyed.
- Fatigue, changes in sleep or appetite, and difficulty concentrating.

If depression lasts more than two weeks, it's important to seek help. Depression leads to bigger health problems if left untreated. A mental health professional would help you understand what's causing it and work with you to feel like yourself again.

TRAUMA

Symptoms:

- Flashbacks or intrusive memories of a traumatic event.
- Nightmares or sleep disturbances.
- Emotional numbness or detachment.
- Avoidance of reminders of the trauma.

Trauma, particularly PTSD, affects women at a significantly higher rate than men—two to three times more, in fact. For many, this trauma stems from deeply painful experiences such as sexual assault or childhood abuse, which are often difficult to talk about due to the stigma. It's heartbreaking to know that about 1 in 3 women will face sexual assault in their lifetime. PTSD can bring about long-lasting emotional and physical challenges, but it's important to remember that healing is possible with the right support and care.

Autoimmune Diseases

HYPERTHYROIDISM

Symptoms:

- Unexplained weight loss, despite increased appetite.
- Rapid heartbeat or irregular heartbeat.
- Sweating, nervousness, and irritability.

Hyperthyroidism is often mistaken for anxiety because their symptoms overlap. In older adults, it can even be confused with depression or dementia. If you're experiencing unexplained symptoms, don't ignore them—demand the right care.

SYSTEMIC LUPUS ERYTHEMATOSUS (SLE)

Symptoms:

- A butterfly-shaped rash across the nose and cheeks.
- Joint pain, swelling, and stiffness.
- Extreme fatigue, fever, or chest pain.

Women with SLE often face challenges getting a proper diagnosis, which can delay treatment. If you're dealing with unexplained rashes, joint pain, or fatigue that doesn't improve with rest, it's important to get checked. Early diagnosis is key to preventing long-term organ damage.

SYSTEMIC SCLEROSIS (SSC)

Symptoms:

- Thickening or tightening of the skin, especially on the hands and face.
- Difficulty swallowing, joint pain, and swelling.
- Shortness of breath, especially with exertion.

Many women with SSc find their symptoms overlooked or misunderstood. Because the condition is rare and its symptoms can be unclear, it's easy for doctors to miss the diagnosis. To avoid long-term complications, it's important to demand a diagnosis and treatment as soon as you notice any signs.

RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS (RA)

Symptoms:

- Pain, stiffness, and swelling in the joints, particularly in the morning or after sitting for long periods.
- Symmetrical joint pain (i.e., both hands or knees affected).
- Fatigue and fever.

Joint pain is often brushed off as "normal for women," which can delay an RA diagnosis. If your symptoms point to RA, getting diagnosed early can prevent lasting damage. Ensure you're heard and seek the right treatment to avoid unnecessary suffering.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS (MS)

Symptoms:

- Numbness or weakness in limbs, often on one side of the body.
- Blurred or double vision.
- Difficulty walking, with balance problems or fatigue.

MS is often misdiagnosed because its symptoms can resemble conditions like migraines and fibromyalgia, and women are more likely to experience this. This can lead to delays in getting the right care. An accurate diagnosis is key to managing symptoms and slowing the progression of the disease.

HOW EVERYONE CAN ADVOCATE FOR BETTER WOMEN'S HEALTHCARE

As much as it can be tough to get doctors to listen to a woman's pain, it's crucial to keep speaking up and demanding the care you deserve—not just for your own health, but for the women who come after you. By pushing for answers and refusing to dismiss your symptoms, you can help shift the narrative and create a healthcare system where women's experiences are taken seriously.

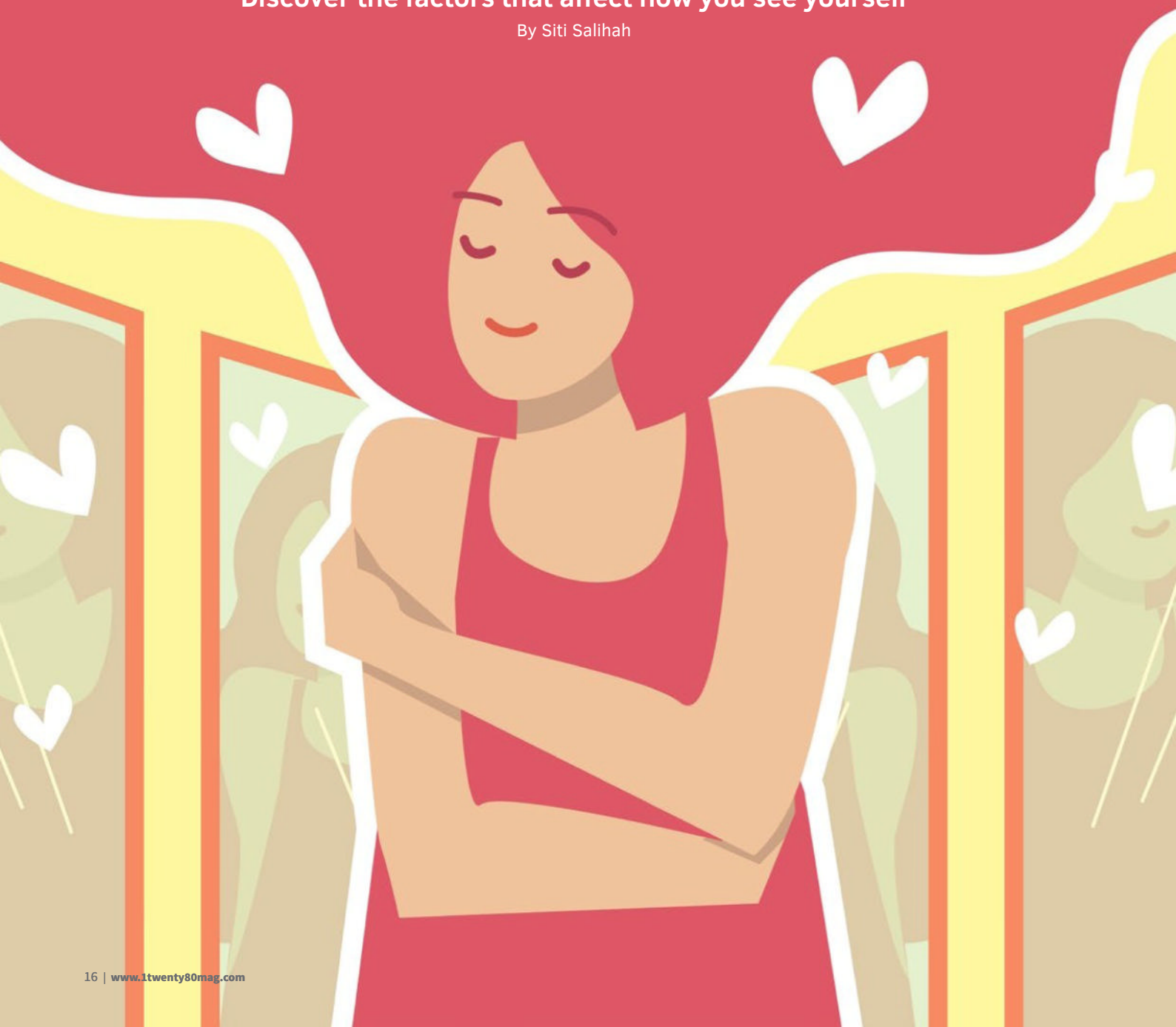
If you're dealing with symptoms that persist, worsen, or disrupt your daily life, please do not hesitate to seek help. With your determination, early diagnosis and treatment can make a world of difference. ■

Sources: Clinical Practice & Epidemiology in Mental Health, Higgs LLP, World Economic Forum, Biological Sciences, McLean Hospital, Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases, Frontiers in Neurology

THE SCIENCE OF Self-Esteem

Discover the factors that affect how you see yourself

By Siti Salihah



Esteem. Respect. Admiration. When was the last time you thought of yourself in this light, instead of just others?

Self-esteem. It's how much we value ourselves at our core—how good we feel in our own skin. And it doesn't just appear overnight; it grows over time, shaped by our experiences, relationships, and the people around us. In this article, we'll dive into the psychological and biological side of things, looking at how they influence how we feel about ourselves.

So how do psychological factors shape self-esteem?

Childhood memories

If you grew up being cheered on at home, at school, and truly listened to when needed, chances are you'd have a stronger sense of self-esteem. This is why positive reinforcement and showing gratitude matter—not just to make others feel good, but because they leave a lasting impact for life. Feeling supported and valued creates a solid foundation for our sense of self-worth, helping us navigate hard times.

According to Bowlby's attachment theory, the "lasting psychological bond" between people means that children who've had this experience early on tend to build better self-esteem and self-reliance as they grow up. They often end up being more independent, doing well in school, and forming strong friendships. Plus, they're usually better equipped to handle challenges, which helps them deal with less depression and anxiety later in life.

Trauma

Researchers have found that people who haven't been bullied usually have better social skills, which leads to higher self-esteem. In contrast, those who experience bullying often end up with lower self-esteem. Ironically, bullies themselves frequently struggle with even lower self-esteem than those they target. Isn't that funny? It reflects how complex our emotions and behaviours can be.

Trauma, such as abuse, discrimination, and physical and mental health problems, is damaging to children, and the impact lasts a lifetime. Even as adults, situations like an abusive relationship or a toxic work environment can wear down someone's self-esteem. You might find yourself thinking, "Am I not good enough?"—and the reality is that often isn't true. This shows how deep and lasting the impact of trauma can be on our self-esteem.

Social pressure

Good grades, sports, being cool and fun, looking perfect—so much to do, so little time. During adolescence, fitting in feels incredibly important, often affecting your choices and sense of self-esteem as well as your assurance. But it doesn't stop there. As adults, you graduate and start job hunting, only to see your peers thriving with better pay, fancier apartments, or starting families. It's easy to feel like you're not doing enough when comparing yourself to others.

With so many societal standards it's no surprise that self-esteem takes a hit. However, it's often just in your head. You're the main character in your life so of course, you're the one constantly kept on the edge of your seat. In reality, people are often too caught up in their own lives to even glance at how you're living. Take that as the first step toward resilience and self-acceptance.

How does biology and neurology relate to self-esteem?

The four horsemen of happy hormones

1. Dopamine

The brain's reward system. When you eat your favourite food, sip your morning cuppa, or crush your to-do list, this feel-good hormone kicks in, making you want to do it all over again. This is why a treat or sense of accomplishment feels so satisfying.

This 'motivational' hormone acts as positive reinforcement—each little win helps build your self-esteem bit by bit. It's also released when we connect with others, which is why strong social support often leads to healthier dopamine levels and, in turn, stronger self-esteem. When dopamine's balanced, it creates a feel-good cycle of motivation and self-worth that keeps building on itself.

2. Serotonin

Serotonin is a natural mood booster. When levels are in balance, all is well; when they're low, all is hell! (Your mind could go haywire.) That's why some antidepressants work by boosting it. It also helps with memory, learning, and relaxation.

Interestingly, most of our serotonin isn't produced in the brain but in the gut (pretty odd, right?). Spending time in the sun, exercising, or even meditating can give it a nice boost. This, in turn, strengthens our self-worth over time.

3. Endorphin

Endorphins are the body's natural painkillers, released in response to pain and stress. They help ease both physical and emotional discomfort,—like anxiety or self-doubt—boosting mood and resilience. They play a key role in shaping how we feel about ourselves.

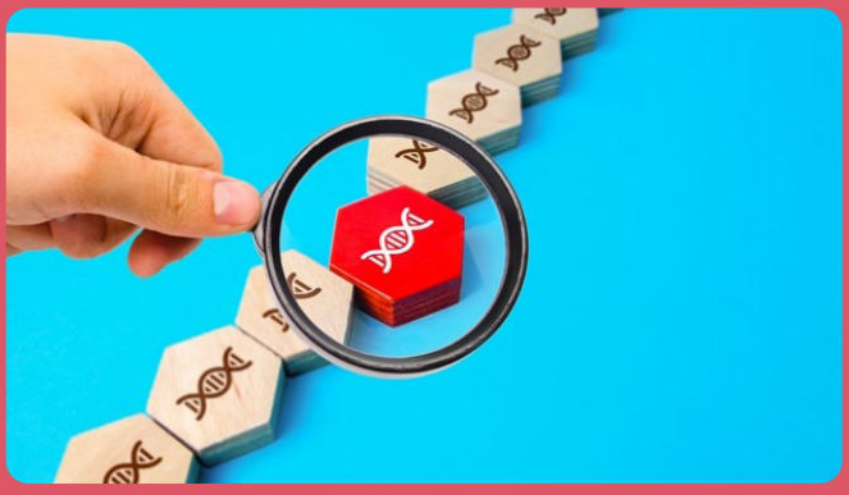
Activities like exercise, laughter, and doing things you enjoy trigger the release of endorphins, creating a cycle of positive reinforcement. The more we do these activities, the better we feel, which strengthens our self-worth over time. Over time, this builds a stronger, more resilient sense of self-worth.

4. Oxytocin

It's been said that Cupid's bow is dipped in oxytocin, "the love hormone", and there's some truth to that. Oxytocin helps bind people in relationships. Released during positive social interactions—like hugging, bonding, or spending time with loved ones—it strengthens our sense of belonging, which is key to self-esteem.

Oxytocin reduces stress and anxiety, both of which can harm self-esteem, while promoting feelings of safety and emotional well-being. This allows us to feel supported, understood, and free to be ourselves, boosting our self-worth. It also fosters empathy and trust in relationships, reminding us we're deserving of meaningful connections.

Does genetics have anything to do with self-esteem



Genetics definitely plays a big part in self-esteem, influencing around 35-50% of happiness, which in turn affects how we see ourselves. Certain genes, like 5-HTTLPR and MAOA, are linked to mood regulation and the production of those "happy hormones"—serotonin, dopamine, oxytocin, and endorphins—that shape our emotional well-being. On top of that, our physical health and attractiveness, also tied to our genes, influence our self-perception, which, while a bit unfair, still plays a key role in self-esteem. ☐

Source: Principles of Social Psychology, Handbook of Biobehavioral Approaches to Self-Regulation, Scientific Reports , Attachment and Loss, Iranian J Publ Health, International Research Journal, National Geographic

PROSTATE MATTERS

Unpacking Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia with insights from a urology expert

By Siti Salihah

Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH) is a common condition that many men face as they get older, yet it's often overlooked or avoided due to embarrassment or misunderstanding. This non-cancerous enlargement of the prostate often causes frustrating urinary issues. While it isn't life-threatening, its impact on daily life can be significant, and the symptoms can sometimes mimic those of more serious conditions.

In this article, we explore the causes of BPH, its effects on men, and available treatments with Dr. Allen Sim Soon Phang, a Consultant Urologist and Robotic Surgeon at Regency Specialist Hospital. Known for his compassionate approach, Dr. Allen ensures his patients feel comfortable and informed about sensitive issues like urinary and sexual health. Committed to offering advanced, minimally invasive treatments, he helps men regain control and improve their quality of life. Dr. Allen's patient-first philosophy ensures no one has to face BPH alone.

1Twenty80:

WHAT IS BENIGN PROSTATIC HYPERPLASIA AND WHAT IS THE PRIMARY CAUSE?

DR. ALLEN: Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH) is a non-cancerous enlargement of the prostate gland, which is common as men age. The prostate gland, located below the bladder, surrounds the urethra, which carries urine from the bladder out of the body. As the prostate enlarges, it can obstruct the urethra, leading to urinary symptoms.

The primary cause of BPH is believed to be hormonal changes that occur with aging. Specifically, the imbalance between estrogen and testosterone levels in older men contributes to prostate growth. Genetics also plays a role; if you have a family history of BPH, you're at an increased risk of developing it.

1Twenty80:

WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON SYMPTOMS PATIENTS EXPERIENCE WHEN THEY HAVE BENIGN PROSTATIC HYPERPLASIA?

DR. ALLEN: Patients with BPH typically experience symptoms such as:

- Frequent urination, especially at night (nocturia).
- Difficulty starting urination.
- Weak or interrupted urine flow.
- Inability to empty the bladder completely.
- Dribbling after urination.
- A sense of urgency to urinate.

These symptoms occur because the enlarged prostate presses on the urethra, affecting the flow of urine. If untreated, BPH can lead to complications like bladder stones, kidney damage, or urinary tract infections (UTIs).

1Twenty80:

URINARY CONTROL AND SEXUAL FUNCTION ARE OFTEN SENSITIVE TOPICS HOW DO YOU ADDRESS THEM WITH PATIENTS?

DR. ALLEN: I approach urinary control and sexual function with sensitivity and empathy, recognizing that these topics can be embarrassing for patients. I emphasize that BPH is a common condition and that they are not alone. I also explain that while BPH can impact both urinary and sexual function, these issues are manageable.

I reassure my patients that we have treatment options that can help them regain control and improve their quality of life. I make sure to answer all questions, address concerns, and provide clear explanations about the potential effects of BPH and its treatments on sexual health.

1Twenty80:

ARE THERE ANY MEDICAL CONDITIONS OR RISKS THAT MAKE SOMEONE MORE PRONE TO BENIGN PROSTATIC HYPERPLASIA?

DR. ALLEN: Yes, certain medical conditions and risk factors can increase the likelihood of developing BPH. These include:

- **AGE:** BPH is primarily an age-related condition, with symptoms typically appearing in men over the age of 50.
- **FAMILY HISTORY:** Men with a family history of BPH are at a higher risk.
- **OBESITY:** Research indicates that obesity, especially central obesity (fat around the abdomen), is linked to an increased risk of developing BPH.
- **DIABETES AND HEART DISEASE:** Both conditions have been associated with a higher incidence of BPH, likely due to the role of insulin resistance and vascular health.

I reassure my patients that we have treatment options that can help them regain control and improve their quality of life."

1Twenty80:

ARE THERE ANY COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT BENIGN PROSTATIC HYPERPLASIA?

DR. ALLEN: A common misconception is that BPH leads to prostate cancer. While BPH is a benign condition, it is not cancerous. However, some symptoms of BPH, like difficulty urinating, can overlap with those of prostate cancer. This makes it important for men to undergo proper diagnosis and screening.

Another misconception is that all men will eventually develop BPH as they age. While the likelihood of developing BPH increases with age, not all men will experience symptoms severe enough to need treatment.

1Twenty80:

IN THE DIAGNOSIS PROCESS HOW DO YOU DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN BENIGN PROSTATIC HYPERPLASIA AND OTHER PROSTATE CONDITIONS LIKE PROSTATE CANCER?

DR. ALLEN: Diagnosis begins with a thorough medical history and physical examination, including a digital rectal exam (DRE) to feel the size and texture of the prostate. A blood test to measure prostate-specific antigen (PSA) levels is also commonly used, although PSA levels can be elevated in both BPH and prostate cancer.

Further tests like ultrasound, urine flow tests, or cystoscopy can help clarify the diagnosis. If there is suspicion of prostate cancer, a biopsy may be recommended to confirm the presence of cancer cells.

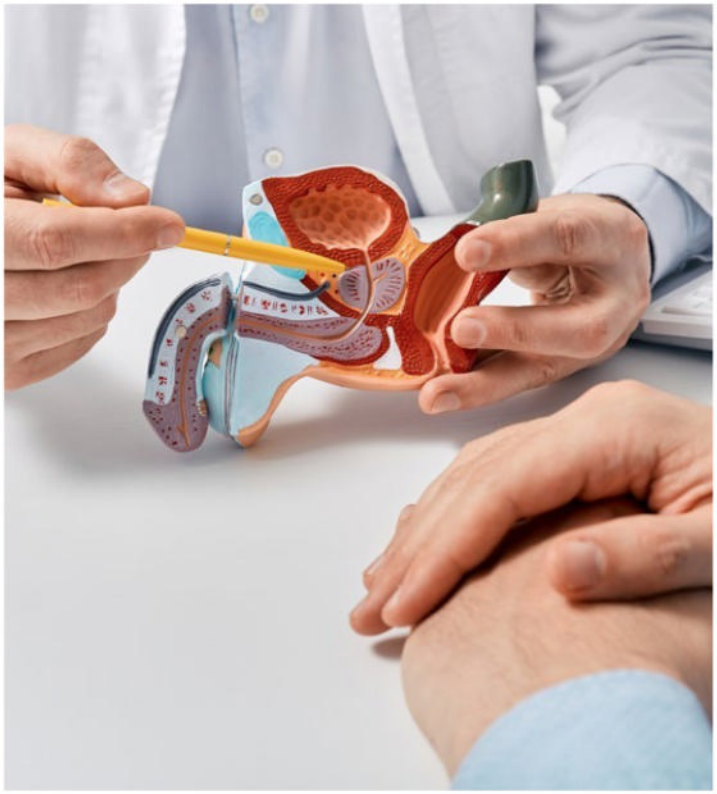
1Twenty80:

CAN BENIGN PROSTATIC HYPERPLASIA BE MANAGED WITH MEDICATION OR IS SURGERY THE ONLY OPTION? IF YES WHAT MEDICATION IS TYPICALLY PRESCRIBED?

DR. ALLEN: BPH can often be managed with medication, especially in the early stages. The most common types of medications include:

- Alpha-blockers (e.g. tamsulosin) help relax the muscles around the prostate and bladder neck, improving urine flow.
- 5-alpha reductase inhibitors (e.g. finasteride) reduce the size of the prostate by blocking the hormone that causes prostate growth.
- Combination therapy may also be used for more severe symptoms.

Surgery is considered when medications are ineffective or if complications such as urinary retention occur. Options like transurethral resection of the prostate (TURP) or laser surgery are available.



1Twenty80:

ARE THERE ANY EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES PROCEDURES OR LESS INVASIVE OPTIONS FOR TREATING BENIGN PROSTATIC HYPERPLASIA?

DR. ALLEN: Yes, there have been exciting advancements in minimally invasive treatments for BPH. For example:

- **GREENLIGHT LASER THERAPY:** This procedure uses laser energy to remove prostate tissue, offering quicker recovery times and less bleeding than traditional surgery.
- **PROSTATE ARTERY EMBOLIZATION (PAE):** A less invasive procedure where blood flow to the enlarged prostate is reduced, shrinking the gland.
- **ROBOTIC-ASSISTED PROSTATE SURGERY:** This technology offers greater precision with smaller incisions, resulting in faster recovery and fewer complications.
- **REZŪM THERAPY:** A steam-based procedure that uses water vapor to shrink excess prostate tissue, reducing urinary symptoms with minimal downtime.
- **PROLIEVE:** A combination of heat and pressure applied through the urethra to reduce prostate size, typically performed as an outpatient procedure with quick recovery.

These innovations allow for more effective, quicker recovery treatments with fewer risks compared to traditional surgery.

1Twenty80:

ARE THERE ANY LIFESTYLE CHANGES A PATIENT CAN MAKE TO PREVENT THE PROGRESSION OR REDUCE THE SYMPTOMS OF BENIGN PROSTATIC HYPERPLASIA?

DR. ALLEN: Lifestyle changes can certainly help reduce symptoms or slow the progression of BPH. These include:

- **MAINTAINING A HEALTHY WEIGHT:** This can reduce abdominal pressure on the bladder and improve symptoms.
- **AVOIDING CAFFEINE AND ALCOHOL:** Both can irritate the bladder and worsen urinary symptoms.
- **STAYING ACTIVE:** Regular exercise, particularly pelvic floor exercises, can improve bladder control.
- **REDUCING FLUID INTAKE AT NIGHT:** This helps to reduce nocturia (frequent nighttime urination).

While lifestyle changes alone may not cure BPH, they can significantly improve quality of life and reduce the severity of symptoms.

1Twenty80:

WHAT IS THE LIKELIHOOD OF THE CONDITION REAPPEARING AFTER TREATMENT AND HOW CAN IT BE PREVENTED?

DR. ALLEN: After treatment, BPH symptoms may not necessarily return, especially if medications are effective or surgery successfully removes excess prostate tissue. However, the condition may recur in some cases, particularly in men with a family history of BPH or those who continue to experience hormonal imbalances.

To reduce the risk of recurrence, it is essential to follow a prescribed treatment plan, monitor symptoms, and make lifestyle modifications that improve urinary function.

To reduce the risk of recurrence, it is essential to follow a prescribed treatment plan, monitor symptoms, and make lifestyle modifications that improve urinary function."

1Twenty80:

HOW DO YOU DETERMINE THE SUITABLE COURSE OF TREATMENT FOR A PATIENT WITH BENIGN PROSTATIC HYPERPLASIA?

DR. ALLEN: Treatment decisions depend on the severity of symptoms, the patient's overall health, and their preferences. For mild symptoms, lifestyle changes and medications may be sufficient. If symptoms are more severe or medications are ineffective, surgery may be recommended.

I take into consideration factors such as the patient's age, comorbid conditions, and whether they have a strong desire to avoid surgery. I also involve the patient in the decision-making process, explaining the benefits and risks of each treatment option. ■

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Side-Effects of Traditional Iron

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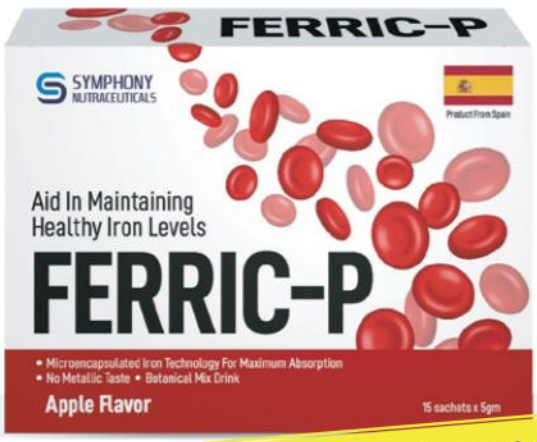

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Common traditional iron tablets used such as **ferrous fumarate and ferrous sulphate** are known to increase iron status, but their major restriction is that it can cause unwanted side effects as mentioned above.

Ferrous Fumarate - Uses, Side Effects and More (2022). WebMD. https://www.webmd.com/drugs/2/drug-4129/ferrous-fumarate-oral/details
Synder, C. (2021 January 5). Ferrous Sulfate: Benefits, Uses, Side Effects, and More Healthline. https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/ferrous-sulfate#bottom-line

For more enquires please contact 03-76125476

SYMPHONY NUTRACEUTICALS

BEYOND PILLS & PRESCRIPTIONS

In this personal interview, a pharmacist opens up about their journey, challenges, and advice for aspiring pharmacists

By Siti Salihah

For Nur Hafizah Anawi, becoming a pharmacist was more than just a career choice—it was a calling. With over seven years of experience, including her recent shift to an Enforcement Pharmacist role focusing on pharmaceutical crime in Malaysia, her career has evolved with time. Her passion, however, goes beyond her professional expertise. But behind the lab coat lies a story of inspiration, challenges, and defining moments that fuel her love for the profession. In this personal interview, Ms. Nur Hafizah Anawi shares what sparked her passion, the most memorable experiences along the way, and her advice for aspiring pharmacists.

1Twenty80:

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO PURSUE A CAREER IN PHARMACY?

NUR HAFIZAH ANAWI: Honestly,I think I inspired myself to become a pharmacist! It suits my natural characteristics—I genuinely enjoy interacting with people and offering advice or support. It feels like I was destined for this profession.

1Twenty80:

WHAT WAS YOUR JOURNEY LIKE FROM BEING A PHARMACY STUDENT TO WHERE YOU ARE NOW?

NUR HAFIZAH ANAWI: Pharmacy school felt like a rollercoaster ride. I wasn't the top student and often burned the midnight oil just to get decent grades (which weren't always great!). But in the end, all the hard work paid off.

1Twenty80:

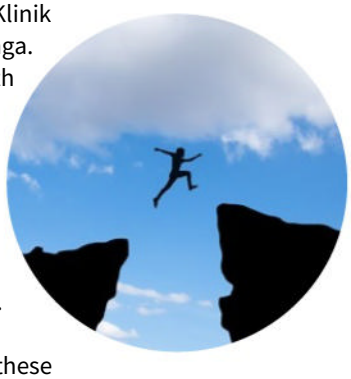
WHAT'S THE MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT IN YOUR CAREER SO FAR?

NUR HAFIZAH ANAWI: One of my most memorable moments was living on my own in Johor, away from my family and husband, while serving as the Yang Menjaga (person in charge) at Klinik Kesihatan Lenga in Muar. Despite being a UF41 officer (the most junior rank) at the time, I managed to survive and grow during those four challenging years.

1Twenty80:

WHAT WAS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE YOU FACED WHILE BECOMING A PHARMACIST, AND HOW DID YOU OVERCOME IT?

NUR HAFIZAH ANAWI: The biggest challenge for me was stepping into a leadership role with my anak buah (team members). It wasn't easy, especially since some of my staff were older than me. On top of that, I had to ensure the smooth running of the pharmacy at Klinik Kesihatan Lenga. Any issues with patients or medication errors made by my staff ultimately became my responsibility.

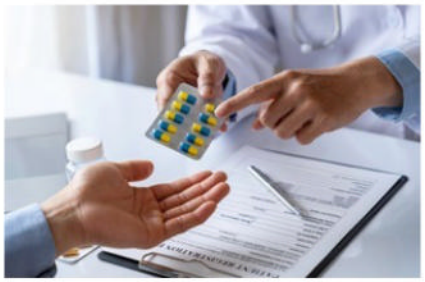


To overcome these challenges, I focused on staying rational. I made sure to listen to my staff, delegate tasks fairly to avoid dissatisfaction, and communicate clearly. These skills were essential not only for managing the team but also for handling the often difficult situations we faced with patients daily at work.

1Twenty80:

WHAT SKILLS OR QUALITIES DO YOU THINK ARE MOST IMPORTANT FOR SOMEONE TO SUCCEED AS A PHARMACIST?

NUR HAFIZAH ANAWI: Effective communication skills are crucial for interacting with both patients and colleagues. As pharmacists, we must communicate clearly and empathetically to understand and address the needs of those we serve. Additionally, being understanding is essential for building trust and rapport in our profession.



1Twenty80:

WHAT'S A COMMON MISCONCEPTION ABOUT PHARMACISTS THAT YOU'D LIKE TO CLARIFY?

NUR HAFIZAH ANAWI: There's a common misconception that a pharmacist's job is simple, often reduced to just handing out medications, like a sales assistant might do. However, our role is far more complex and carries significant responsibility. When supplying medication, we ensure the right patient receives the right medication, at the correct dose, at the right time, and via the appropriate route. Beyond that, we also educate patients about potential side effects, drug interactions, and how to properly use their medications. It's a multi-faceted job that requires attention to detail, communication skills, and a deep understanding of pharmacology to ensure patient safety and well-being.

1Twenty80:

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE CONSIDERING A CAREER IN PHARMACY?

NUR HAFIZAH ANAWI: If you truly have a passion for it, go for it. Pharmacy school isn't easy, but with dedication and smart work, you can succeed. Stay focused and remember, it's not just about learning the facts – it's about applying them to make a real difference in patient care. You've got this!

1Twenty80:

HOW DO YOU STAY MOTIVATED AND CONTINUE TO GROW IN YOUR PROFESSION?

NUR HAFIZAH ANAWI: I stay motivated by surrounding myself with a positive environment. Personally, I've made a career shift from being a Clinic Pharmacist to an Enforcement Pharmacist, and through this transition, I've grown and learned many new things. Change can be challenging, but it also brings valuable opportunities for growth and development.

> **Change can be challenging, but it also brings valuable opportunities for growth and development."**

1Twenty80:

WHAT MESSAGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SHARE WITH FUTURE PHARMACISTS?

NUR HAFIZAH ANAWI: The pharmacy profession is currently facing challenges in terms of placement. However, remember that no matter where you work—whether in the government or private sector—you are always a pharmacist. The value and impact of your role remain the same, and your skills will continue to make a difference wherever you go.

1Twenty80:

WHAT'S THE STRANGEST OR MOST UNEXPECTED MOMENT A PATIENT HAS EVER HAD WITH YOU?

NUR HAFIZAH ANAWI: One of the most unexpected moments was when a patient said, "Is this Cik Pizah? Cik Pizah is so beautiful, and your explanations are so clear." It was such a spontaneous and sweet compliment! Aha.

1Twenty80:

CAN YOU SHARE A TIME WHEN YOU FELT YOU MADE A REAL DIFFERENCE IN SOMEONE'S LIFE AS A PHARMACIST?

NUR HAFIZAH ANAWI: When my patients are free from tuberculosis and hepatitis C, I feel a great sense of accomplishment. The key to overcoming these diseases is strict adherence to the prescribed medication, and I'm grateful that they trust my guidance.

1Twenty80:

HOW DO YOU BUILD TRUST WITH YOUR PATIENTS?

NUR HAFIZAH ANAWI: Building trust with patients involves actively listening, showing empathy, communicating clearly, maintaining confidentiality, and demonstrating professionalism in all aspects of care.

1Twenty80:

DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE ASPECT OF THE PHARMACIST-PATIENT RELATIONSHIP?

NUR HAFIZAH ANAWI: I believe one of the most rewarding aspects of the pharmacist-patient relationship is the opportunity to empower patients through education. By providing clear, accessible information about their medications and health, I can help patients make better decisions and feel more confident in managing their own care.

1Twenty80:

WHAT DO YOU THINK PEOPLE OFTEN OVERLOOK ABOUT THE ROLE OF PHARMACISTS IN HEALTHCARE?

NUR HAFIZAH ANAWI: One aspect people often overlook is how pharmacists manage medication inventory, which plays a critical role in ensuring that the right medications are available when needed. Besides dispensing and prvoviding counsel on proper medication use, pharmacists carefully track stock levels, manage expiration dates, and coordinate with suppliers to prevent shortages. This behind-the-scenes work helps maintain a seamless flow of care and ensures patients receive the medications they need on time, without delays or disruptions.

This behind-the-scenes work helps maintain a seamless flow of care and ensures patients receive the medications they need on time, without delays or disruptions."

1Twenty80:

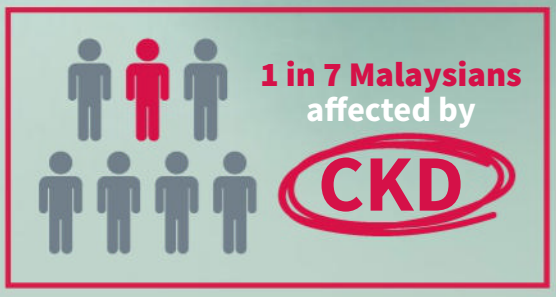
IF YOU WEREN'T A PHARMACIST, WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'D BE DOING RIGHT NOW?

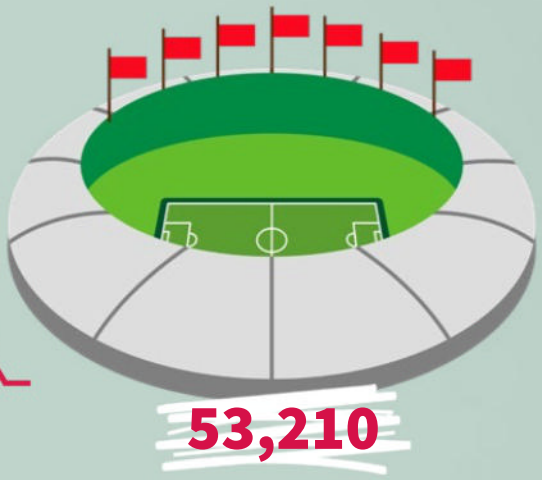
NUR HAFIZAH ANAWI: If I weren't a pharmacist, I'd be drawn to psychology. I've always been fascinated by human behavior and the ways in which mental health influences overall well-being. As a psychologist, I'd enjoy helping people navigate their challenges and improve their mental health, much like how I help patients manage their medications and health in my current role. Both paths would allow me to connect with people and make a meaningful difference in their lives. ■

Debunking Common Myths About CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE (CKD): A Deeper Look into Kidney Health in Malaysia

By Dr. Azim Hazizuddin bin Nasaruddin
Head of Medical Department
National Kidney Foundation of Malaysia

As we observe World Kidney Day (WKD) 2025 on 13 March, it's vital to raise awareness about Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD), a growing health concern in Malaysia. CKD has reached alarming rates, with one in seven Malaysians affected—equivalent to 4.7 million adults—and many are unaware that they are living with the disease until it reaches advanced stages. Preliminary data from the National Renal Registry (NRR) reveals that there were 53,210 dialysis patients in Malaysia in 2023 (NRR, 2023). This WKD, NKF aims to shed light on the common myths surrounding CKD and offer valuable insights to help the public understand the realities of kidney health.





53,210

DIALYSIS PATIENTS IN MALAYSIA IN 2023

Number of Malaysians relying on dialysis = enough to fill over half of Bukit Jalil Stadium!

Reference:
National Renal Registry (NRR). (2023). Annual Report of the Malaysian Dialysis and Transplant Registry. National Renal Registry, Malaysia.

NKF's Efforts to Prevent CKD Progression

Early Action

=

+

NKF Screening

Educational Outreach

#1 MYTH:

Kidney disease ONLY impacts people with diabetes or high blood pressure.

TRUTH: In Malaysia, diabetes and hypertension are indeed the leading causes of CKD, but they are not the only factors. Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE) and IgA nephropathy, a high intake of traditional painkillers (such as nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) like diclofenac, ibuprofen and naproxen), genetic conditions such as polycystic kidney disease and lifestyle factors like excessive salt consumption can also lead to kidney damage. Malaysians may also be at risk due to a lack of awareness about the early signs of kidney disease, which makes it even more important to educate the public on the many causes of CKD.

INSIGHT: In conjunction with WKD 2025, NKF Malaysia will be highlighting the importance of regular health screenings. For Malaysians at high risk, such as those with a family history of CKD or diabetes, taking action early can prevent progression. NKF's screening programs and educational outreach, particularly in rural areas, will be vital in tackling this issue.

#2 MYTH:

Chronic Kidney Disease doesn't get worse if it's managed properly.

TRUTH: CKD is not reversible but the progression is modifiable. Some individuals, despite proper management of conditions like diabetes and hypertension, may experience rapid kidney decline, while others may stabilize for years. In Malaysia, where there is still a lack of widespread understanding of CKD, many assume that just taking medication is enough. However, the progression of CKD can also be affected by factors like diet, access to proper healthcare, and timely treatment.

INSIGHT: Managing CKD requires more than just medication—it involves a comprehensive approach that includes regular monitoring, proper diet, timely treatment, and access to quality healthcare. In Malaysia, misconceptions about CKD often lead to delayed interventions, underscoring the need for greater awareness and education about the nature of CKD progression and the importance of proactive management.

#3 MYTH:

If you're on dialysis, it's too late to make a difference.

TRUTH: Dialysis is often perceived as the final stage of CKD, but it can also be a turning point for many patients, offering hope and prolonging life. In Malaysia, a significant portion of the CKD population relies on dialysis, and advances in treatment methods like home dialysis and the use of single-use dialyzers are improving the quality of life for patients. The misconception that dialysis patients have no quality of life can be damaging.

INSIGHT: NKF Malaysia has been sharing stories of dialysis patients who live fulfilling lives despite their treatment. By highlighting local success stories and advancements in dialysis care, NKF strives to dispel the stigma around dialysis. Through NKF's support, many patients find renewed hope and a sense of community.

#4 MYTH:

Once diagnosed with CKD, the only option is dialysis or transplant.

TRUTH: Dialysis and kidney transplant are often the last resort in advanced CKD, but many Malaysians with early-stage CKD can manage their condition effectively through lifestyle modifications. By adhering to a proper CKD diet, controlling the risk factors, and use of kidney protective medications, CKD can be stabilized & delayed for many years. This is particularly important for patients in rural areas where access to transplant or dialysis options may be limited.

INSIGHT: NKF Malaysia actively promotes awareness of the early stages of CKD and the importance of prevention and management. Through ongoing efforts, NKF emphasizes diet education, particularly in communities with high rates of hypertension and diabetes, to help prevent the progression to dialysis and transplants. Localized health campaigns targeting both urban and rural populations provide educational resources and support for healthier lifestyles.

#5 MYTH:
Diagnosis of CKD needs sophisticated testing.

TRUTH: Many Malaysians still believe that CKD can only be diagnosed using sophisticated tests. The fact is, CKD diagnosis is simple and involves a combination of urine tests (for protein and blood), blood tests for creatinine level and estimated glomerular filtration rate (eGFR), and imaging with ultrasound. The earliest manifestations of kidney disease is often abnormal urine test for protein and red blood cells.

INSIGHT: NKF Malaysia emphasizes the importance of early screening for all age groups, including high-risk individuals such as the older persons, people with diabetes and high blood pressure, those with a family history of kidney disease. Through NKF's mobile health screening initiatives, we strive to ensure that Malaysians across the country have access to vital screenings, detecting CKD early and fostering lifelong kidney health awareness.

#6 MYTH:
Dialysis is affordable

TRUTH: While dialysis subsidies and support mechanisms exist, the financial, psychological, and time burdens of dialysis treatment in Malaysia are significant. The cost of dialysis varies depending on the facility, with government hospitals offering it at minimal fees but with limited slots, while NGOs like NKF charge RM90 per session after subsidies, and private centres charge between RM150 and RM250 per session. With patients requiring around 12 to 13 sessions per month, the monthly costs range from RM1,080 to RM3,250, and annual expenses can escalate to RM39,800, excluding medications, transportation, and other related costs.

Beyond finances, dialysis imposes psychological strain, often leading to anxiety, depression, and feelings of isolation due to the demanding treatment schedule. Taking haemodialysis treatment as an example, the time commitment is equally taxing, as each session lasts four hours, with travel and preparation adding more time, resulting in around 18 hours per week dedicated solely to treatment. This disrupts work, daily routines, and personal responsibilities, further diminishing patients' quality of life. Given these burdens, the importance of early screening cannot be overstated, as detecting kidney disease early allows for proactive management and intervention, potentially delaying or even preventing the need for dialysis."

	NKF (subsidized)	Private
Session	RM90	RM150 - RM250
Monthly	RM1,080 - RM1,170	RM1,800 - RM3,250
Annually	RM13,000 - RM14,040	RM21,600 - RM39,000

CONCLUSION:

As we celebrate **World Kidney Day 2025**, it's essential for Malaysians to be well-informed about CKD. By debunking these myths and fostering a deeper understanding of the disease, we can empower individuals to take proactive steps in protecting their kidney health. NKF Malaysia is committed to offering continuous support through education, early detection programs, and patient care services. Let's work together to raise awareness and take action toward a healthier future, where CKD no longer stands as an insurmountable challenge for Malaysians.

Source: National Renal Registry (NRR). (2023). Annual Report of the Malaysian Dialysis and Transplant Registry. National Renal Registry, Malaysia.

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WHO'S GOT A FRIEND IN ME?

Understanding toxic friendships and finding your way

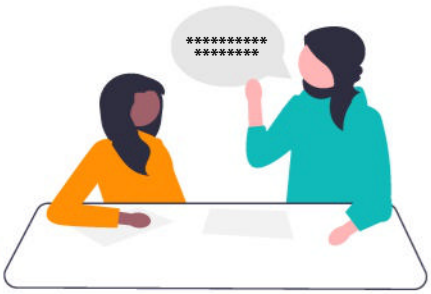
By Siti Salihah

Toxic in our daily lives isn't as sweet as Britney Spears makes it sound. When it comes to (toxic) friends, they're often the ones leaving you wanting to pull your hair out or roll your eyes into oblivion. But they're your friends... so what can you do?

But actually—nerdy index finger point—there is something you can do. First, though, let's figure out what truly makes a friend toxic. Are we sure the term's not just being overused on the internet by bitter, vengeful individuals, causing many to be unfairly labelled?

Psychologically speaking, toxic friends are those who don't genuinely care about being a good friend. They don't care that their behaviour negatively impacts your mental and emotional well-being, leaving you feeling drained instead of supported—which, you know, is what friends are actually supposed to do.

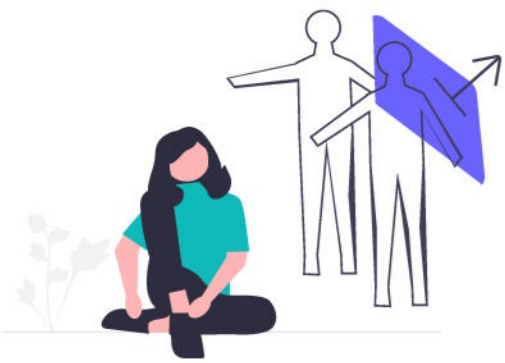
SO LET'S BREAK IT DOWN. A FRIEND IS TOXIC WHEN



#1

Everything is about them

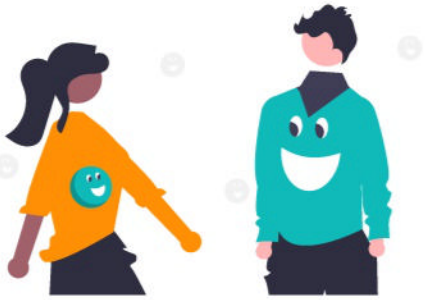
Picture this: you've had a bad day, and you're venting to your friend, only for them to somehow turn the conversation into their bad day. Or maybe they pretend to listen, but when they respond, it has nothing to do with what you shared. Instead, they steer the focus to how they've dealt with a similar situation and—surprise—it worked out perfectly for them. Sure, said with the right tone and intention, sharing their experience could feel comforting. But when it's framed in a way that leaves you feeling small and makes them feel superior, it's anything but helpful.



#2

They never apologise

Let's say you got into a fight, but only you are thinking about it. A toxic friend ignores you and makes you feel as though your feelings don't matter. When someone wrongs you, a civil conversation, an apology, and a pinky promise to do better are important. But toxic friends forget all that, acting like nothing happened. Over time, this lack of accountability doesn't just get brushed under the rug—it chips away trust, making the friendship feel one-sided and leaving you emotionally drained.



#3

They're manipulative

You might not realise this. One moment you're making your own choices, and the next, you're being gaslighted into thinking or acting a certain way. They might guilt-trip you emotionally, making you feel bad for setting boundaries or prioritising your own needs. Sometimes, they subtly embarrass you to push you into doing what they want. They make you feel insecure, pretending to "help" while actually making you do things that benefit themselves..

#4

They're jealous

But not the lighthearted, playful kind where someone says, "Oh, I wish I had your hair!" type of jealous (because honestly, that's more uplifting than envious). Instead, it's the kind that flares up whenever you accomplish something. If something good happens to you, they won't feel happy for you. Instead, they'll downplay your success, making dismissive comments that steal your joy and make your achievements seem smaller to everyone—when you're supposed to be celebrated!

#5

They see you as a competition

Comparison truly is the thief of joy—or in this case, the thief of peace. Toxic friends just won't let up. And it's not about wanting mutual success or being each other's support system. No, it's because they can't handle the idea of you outshining them. Your achievements unsettle them, so they obsess over keeping tabs on you instead of finding peace with their own progress. It's exhausting, and it raises an important question: what do they actually want?

A FRIEND MIGHT BE IN NEED

A person may, understandably, act out of character because they're going through something difficult. If you've been friends for years and their toxic behaviour is recent, it could be worth your energy to try to help. Here's a step-by-step guide on what you can do:

#1 Start with a conversation

Approach your friend with honesty and empathy. A good heart-to-heart can show them you're coming from a place of concern, not criticism.

#2 Give it time and space

Let them process what you've said and see if they show signs of wanting to change or get help.

#3 Time for professional help

If you think there's something deeper going on, gently pitch the idea of talking to a therapist or counsellor who can give them the support they need.

#4 Set boundaries

You can still be there for them, but it's important not to carry their emotional weight entirely. Protect your mental health—it matters too.

#5 Know your limits

Remember, you're not their therapist. If it gets too overwhelming, it's okay to step back and let a professional take over.

Drawing the line

Sometimes walking away is the healthiest option. Letting go can be tough. The shared memories and lingering hope that things might change, can make it feel like you're giving up. But if, deep down, you know staying friends with them means sacrificing your peace and self-worth, then it's clear it won't be worth it.

It doesn't mean you don't care, though. It just means you've recognised that the friendship has become unhealthy and isn't worth draining your energy—because that's not what friendship should feel like. It's okay to outgrow someone. In the end, they might have their own things to figure out, and we can still hope for the best for them, right? Focus on healing and building healthier connections. It's not selfish—it's necessary.

Thoughts

People come into our lives, and for a while, they feel like they're ours. But when it's time to let go—whether it's for better or worse—it just means it's no longer your chapter together. Wish them well, focus on yours elf, and move forward. The best friendships are built on mutual care, respect, and growth—and you deserve nothing less! ■

References: Perilaku Komunikasi Toxic Friendship, Personality and Individual Differences, South Eastern European Journal of Public Health

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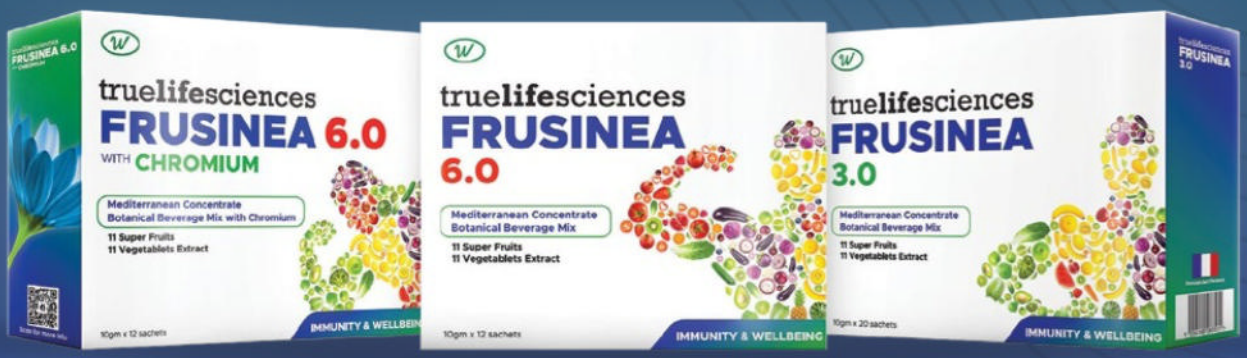

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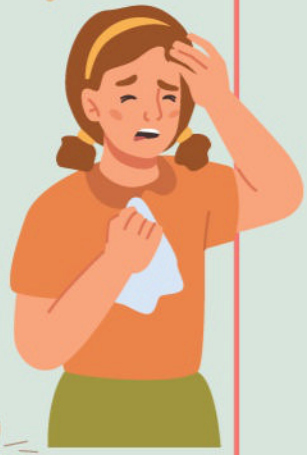
Understanding the Differences Between Influenza, Common Cold, and HMPV

Stay informed about flu, cold, and HMPV symptoms, treatment, and prevention

By Edeline Anne Goh

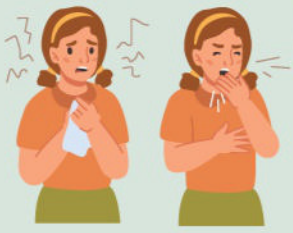
As the cold and flu season rolls around, many people experience similar symptoms but aren't always sure what they have. Is it the flu, a cold, or something else entirely? One virus you might not be familiar with is Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV), which can also cause symptoms that overlap with influenza and the common cold. In this article, we will explore the differences between influenza, the common cold, and HMPV, helping you understand what's going on when you're feeling under the weather.

What Is the Common Cold?



The common cold is a viral infection typically caused by rhinoviruses, although other viruses like coronaviruses and respiratory syncytial viruses (RSV) can also cause colds. It's one of the most common viral infections, especially in colder months when people are spending more time indoors.

Symptoms of the common cold usually include:



- Runny or stuffy nose
- Sneezing
- Mild cough
- Sore throat
- Mild headache
- Mild fatigue

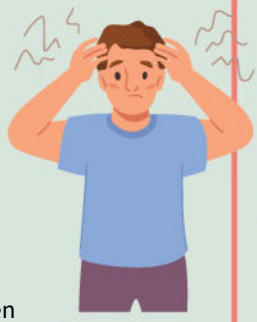
Cold symptoms are generally mild and can be managed with rest, hydration, and over-the-counter (OTC) remedies like decongestants. A cold typically lasts 7-10 days and usually doesn't cause severe complications.

What Is Influenza (The Flu)?

Influenza (the flu) is a contagious viral infection caused by the influenza virus. Unlike the common cold, the flu can come on suddenly and cause more severe symptoms. The flu is a serious illness that can lead to complications like pneumonia, especially in vulnerable groups like the elderly, children, and those with weakened immune systems.

The flu symptoms include:

- High fever (37.8°C or higher)
- Chills and sweats
- Severe body aches
- Fatigue and weakness
- Sore throat
- Dry cough
- Headache



Influenza tends to hit harder and faster than the common cold, often leaving individuals bedridden for several days. If you experience flu-like symptoms, especially with high fever and severe body aches, it's important to seek medical care promptly. Antiviral medications are available to shorten the duration of the flu if taken early.

What Is Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV)?

Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) is a lesser-known respiratory virus that can cause symptoms similar to both the flu and a cold. It was first discovered in 2001, but scientists are still learning about it. HMPV is a common cause of respiratory illness in both children and adults, particularly during the winter and spring months.

HMPV symptoms can include:

- Cough (sometimes severe)
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath or wheezing
- Mild fever
- Fatigue

While HMPV symptoms may resemble those of a cold or flu, it often causes more severe respiratory issues like wheezing or difficulty breathing, especially in young children and older adults. Like the flu, HMPV can lead to more serious complications, particularly in those with underlying health conditions, including asthma or heart disease.

How to Protect Yourself

Preventing influenza, the common cold, and HMPV involves many of the same basic steps:

- Wash your hands frequently.
- Avoid close contact with sick individuals.
- Get a flu vaccine each year to protect against influenza.
- Use tissues or elbows to cover coughs and sneezes.
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle to boost your immune system, including a balanced diet, regular exercise, and adequate sleep.

When to See a Doctor

While most cold and flu symptoms resolve on their own, it's important to see a doctor if you experience:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath.
- Severe or persistent fever.
- Worsening symptoms.
- A weakened immune system (due to illness or medication).

Understanding the differences between influenza, the common cold, and HMPV can help you manage your symptoms and seek appropriate treatment. Whether it's the flu, a cold, or HMPV, practicing good hygiene and taking preventative measures can help protect you and those around you. Always consult with a healthcare professional if you have concerns or if symptoms worsen. ■

POWER AND POISE IN PILATES

Strong, steady, and effortlessly graceful—why Pilates is the workout of the moment

By Siti Salihah

For a long time, Pilates was regarded as an 'easy, girl workout', often underestimated by those seeking traditional strength training. That is, until more people started trying it out of curiosity—or sheer skepticism—and left the studio sore, humbled, and very, very wrong.

Ironically, Pilates wasn't designed to be an 'easy' workout. It was originally created for injured soldiers during World War I to help them rebuild strength. Later, dancers and athletes adopted it for injury prevention, but somehow, it became a 'girly' workout.

WHY PILATES IS BLOWING UP

LOWER IMPACT AND JOINT-FRIENDLY

Pilates works on deep core muscles to support and stabilize the spine without straining the joints. Unlike heavy lifting or high-impact cardio, it focuses on smooth, controlled movements that are kinder to the knees, hips, and back.

GOOD FOR POSTURE

Pilates promotes proper spinal alignment, easing the strain on your lower back, shoulders, and neck—places that often ache after traditional workouts. It's been found that 12 weeks of Pilates can strengthen your core, improve the way you move, and even help prevent injuries caused by bad form.

SUSTAINABLE FOR LONGEVITY

Pilates helps older adults stay strong, flexible, and mobile without putting too much strain on their joints. Studies show that people are more likely to stick with Pilates long-term compared to high-impact workouts, which can get tougher with age or injury.

Sources: Muscle, Ligaments and Tendons Journal, Bulletin of Faculty of Physical Therapy

PAIN RELIEF

Pilates has been shown to reduce chronic low back pain and improve walking mechanics, making it a solid choice for injury recovery or pain management. Moves like side bridges and knee stretches strengthen key muscles without the strain of heavy lifts like squats or deadlifts.

MAT PILATES VS REFORMER PILATES

A lot of people mistake Pilates for just the trendy, (pricey), internet-hyped Reformer classes, but what many don't realise is that Pilates can also be done on a mat.

MAT PILATES uses just a mat and body weight, relying on gravity and precise movements to build strength. It's great for beginners since it teaches fundamental control, balance, and alignment. Because there's no external resistance, deep core engagement is key to progressing.

REFORMER PILATES involves a machine with springs, pulleys, and a sliding carriage, adding resistance to movements. It gives beginners more support while challenging advanced practitioners. The resistance helps build strength, improve posture, and keep workouts varied, making it great for injury recovery and muscle training.

WHICH IS BETTER?

It depends on your goals! Mat Pilates is more accessible and can be done anywhere, making it a cost-effective way to build a strong foundation (in this economy? Yes, please!). Reformer Pilates adds adjustable resistance, making it great for those who need extra support or want to level up their workouts.

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AQUARIAS

The Amazing Benefits of Lemongrass

Lemongrass: More than just a kitchen staple!

By Nur Adilah

Did you know that lemongrass is more than just a flavorful herb used in cooking? It has incredible health benefits too! From easing digestive issues to promoting weight loss, this powerful plant is a must-have in your daily routine.

#1 PACKED WITH ANTIOXIDANTS

Lemongrass is rich in antioxidants like chlorogenic acid, isoorientin, and swertiajaponin. These compounds help combat harmful free radicals in the body, reducing the risk of chronic diseases and keeping your immune system strong.

#2 HELPS LOWER BLOOD PRESSURE

If you struggle with high blood pressure, drinking lemongrass tea may help. It promotes smooth blood flow, has a calming effect, and increases urination—helping your body get rid of excess sodium and fluids.

#3 ACTS AS A NATURAL DIURETIC

For those dealing with heart failure, liver failure, or edema, lemongrass can be a natural way to remove excess fluids and sodium from the body, reducing bloating and discomfort.

#4 IMPROVES ORAL HEALTH

Say goodbye to bad breath! Lemongrass has antibacterial properties that help reduce plaque buildup and keep your mouth fresh and clean.

#5 SUPPORTS WEIGHT LOSS

Trying to shed some extra pounds? Swap your sugary drinks for lemongrass tea! It acts as a natural detox, helping to cleanse the body and support weight loss.

#6 LOWERS CHOLESTEROL LEVELS

Lemongrass helps keep your cholesterol in check. Thanks to its diuretic properties, it helps flush out excess fats, reducing bloating and supporting heart health.

#7 SOOTHES MENSTRUAL CRAMPS

Ladies, this one's for you! Drinking lemongrass tea can help ease menstrual cramps and bloating, offering a natural and soothing remedy for that time of the month.

Lemongrass isn't just a tasty herb—it's a powerhouse of health benefits. So, why not add it to your daily routine? Try it in tea, cooking, or even as a natural remedy!

Sources: Healthline, Medical News

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Beauty Sleep

Discover how a good night's sleep can work wonders for your skin

By Siti Salihah

Sleeping beauty was ahead of her time—she knew exactly what she was doing. While the rest of us were tossing and turning through restless nights, she was getting her beauty sleep in. If only we all had a fairy godmother to guarantee uninterrupted rest too, right?

But there's actually a solid connection between quality sleep and glowing skin. It's not just a fairytale. Sleep is a secret weapon that works overtime while we rest, to keep our skin looking fresh and our minds sharp. In this article, we'll uncover the real magic behind beauty sleep and why prioritizing rest isn't just a luxury—it's a necessity.

FIRST, LET'S GET INTO THE IMPORTANCE OF SLEEP AND REST:

Sleep boosts immunity

When you get enough sleep, your body produces cytokines—proteins that help fight infections and inflammation. Without adequate sleep, your immune system weakens, making you more vulnerable to colds, flu, and other illnesses. So if you're feeling run down, a good night's sleep is probably the best medicine—given that you've actually gone to a GP and gotten yourself checked out.

Sleep sharpens your brain

We've all had those mornings when we feel foggy and disconnected, and it's no surprise if you've stayed up all night. Sleep is critical for cognitive functions like memory, focus, and problem-solving. Research shows that after just 16 hours of being awake, your mental sharpness begins to decline. So if you want to stay sharp and alert, sleep hygiene is non-negotiable.

Sleep saves lives

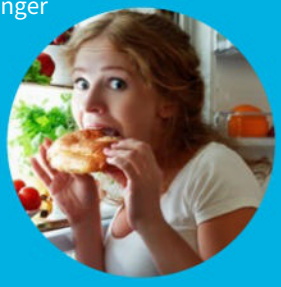
Ever heard of microsleeping? It happens when you're so sleep-deprived that your brain shuts down for a few seconds—microseconds, to be exact—hence the name microsleep—without you even noticing. It sounds harmless, but it can lead to serious accidents. Studies show that sleep deprivation can significantly impair reaction times, increasing the risk of accidents, especially while driving or operating heavy machinery. So yes, sleep is definitely a life-saver in more ways than one.

Sleep supports the reproductive system

For both men and women, inadequate sleep can disrupt hormone production, leading to imbalances that may impact fertility. When you're well-rested, your hormones stay balanced, and your body is in the right gear for reproduction. Before turning to fertility supplements, consider prioritising enough sleep each night—it could be a powerful first step towards supporting your reproductive health.

Sleep maintains weight

The classic struggle: diet, exercise, and—surprise—sleep. Sleep plays a crucial role in regulating hunger hormones. When you're sleep-deprived, your body produces more ghrelin (the hunger hormone) and less leptin (the hormone that tells you that you're full). This imbalance triggers cravings and binge-eating. If you're trying to manage your weight, prioritising sleep could be just as important as your diet.



Sleep improves your mood

Ever notice how a bad night's sleep can make everything seem 10 times worse? That's not just you—it's science. Sleep is key to emotional regulation. When you sleep well, your brain has time to process emotions, resetting your mind for the day ahead. It helps you stay calm, focused, and in a better mood, making it easier to handle whatever life throws your way.

SLEEPING BEAUTY'S SECRET

Now let's get to the juicy part. Want to know how Sleeping Beauty maintains her—well—beauty?

HERE'S THE TRUTH:

#1

The skin repairs at night

Sleep is when your skin gets all the time to repair itself, regenerating cells and replenishing moisture. Without enough sleep, this process is limited, leaving your skin looking tired and dull. Now imagine Beauty's 100 years of sleep… she's definitely had enough time for skin repair, didn't she?

#2

The princess doesn't stress

When you sleep soundly, your body keeps cortisol in check. But when you miss out on sleep, the stress hormone spikes, leading to collagen breakdown and increased skin sensitivity. Over time, this causes puffiness, redness, and wrinkles—the kind of thing that could've never happened to the princess!

#3

Hydration from within

While you sleep, your body rehydrates itself—including your skin. Skimp on sleep, and your skin might look dry, flaky, and lack that fresh, hydrated glow. As for the princess? If a century of beauty rest didn't leave her glowing, we don't know what would!

#4

Fighting inflammation

Inadequate sleep triggers inflammation in the body, which can make your skin look puffy and irritated. It's also linked to conditions like acne, which is often fueled by stress and lack of rest. Lucky for Sleeping Beauty, a century of sleep meant no flare-ups or breakouts to worry about.

#5

Tackling dark circles

When you're sleep-deprived, blood vessels under your skin dilates, making dark circles more noticeable. Plus, lack of sleep causes fluid retention, leading to puffiness around the eyes—giving you that tired look, even when you're (probably?) not. So now it's no secret the princess looks as fresh as a blooming rose!

YOUR GOOD-NIGHT ROUTINE

A well-thought-out plan for your nighttime routine is key to good sleep hygiene. Here's a game plan to consider:

#1 Aim for 7 to 9 hours of sleep

Consistency is key when it comes to sleep. 7 to 9 hours each night gives your body enough time to rest and recharge. This golden range lets your mind and body recover so you can function your best the next day. Sure, everyone's sweet spot might differ slightly, but sticking to this window is your best bet for waking up refreshed and ready to take charge.

#2 Maintain a consistent sleep/wake schedule

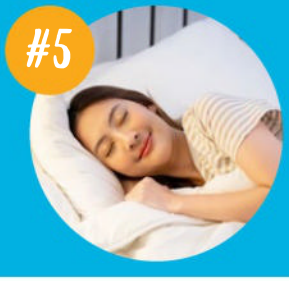
Timing is just as important as the amount of sleep you get. Aligning your sleep with your body's natural circadian rhythm helps you make the most of its restorative power. Your body releases different hormones throughout the day to keep things in sync—like cortisol in the morning to help you wake up, and testosterone and estrogen at night. Keeping a consistent sleep schedule helps everything flow naturally, making sure your body gets the rest it needs.

#3 Incorporate contemplative practice

Activities like meditation, deep breathing, or gentle yoga before bed can help calm your mind and prepare your body for rest. These practices reduce stress, ease anxiety, and promote relaxation. Even taking a few minutes to slow down makes a huge difference in helping you unwind and get a peaceful night's sleep.

#4 Avoid substances that disrupt sleep

Coffee, alcohol, heavy meals, and too much light exposure can interfere with your sleep. These disrupt your body's natural sleep process, which moves through important stages like non-REM and REM sleep, each serving a key function. This leaves you feeling drained, even after a full night's rest. To keep things on track, turn off the lights and plan your meals and coffee intake at least four hours before bed.



#5 Quality over quantity

It's not just about how many hours you sleep, but how well you sleep. Sleep needs to be smooth and uninterrupted for the magic to happen. When your body flows through all those sleep stages without being disturbed, that's when restoration kicks in. So, aim for both length and quality for that full beauty sleep. ☐

Sources: Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine, Pharmacy & Therapeutics, Progress in Cardiovascular Diseases

Ramadan

Sweet and savory, these easy-to-make Ramadan recipes offer the perfect balance of flavour and nutrition for *Iftar* and *Suhoor* meals

By Edeline Anne Goh

As *Ramadan* brings families together, food becomes a central part of the celebration, offering both nourishment and comfort. In this collection of recipes, we're bringing you two crowd-pleasing dishes that are perfect for this special time: sweet and satisfying stuffed dates, and savory, flavorful chicken shawarma. Whether you're looking for a quick, energising bite to break your fast or a hearty meal to enjoy with loved ones, these recipes combine tradition with a delicious twist. Let's dive into these tasty treats to make your *Iftar* or *Suhoor* extra special this *Ramadan*.

• STUFFED DATES WITH WALNUT & CREAM CHEESE •

INGREDIENTS

10	Medjool dates (or any large, soft dates)
10	Whole walnuts (roasted or raw, as preferred)
3 tbsp	Cream cheese
1 tbsp	Honey (optional)
1 tsp	Cinnamon (optional)
A pinch of sea salt (optional)	

METHOD

1. Slice each date lengthwise along one side and remove the pit.
2. Place a walnut inside each date. You can slightly press the walnut down to fit, making sure it's nestled comfortably inside.
3. Using a spoon, gently stuff a small amount of cream cheese into the date, over the walnut. Be sure not to overstuff, as the dates should still close easily.
4. Optional flavorings: Drizzle a little honey over the stuffed dates if you like them sweeter. You can also sprinkle a pinch of cinnamon or a small pinch of sea salt to balance out the sweetness.
5. Serve and enjoy immediately or later. Arrange the stuffed dates on a platter, and they're ready to be served. You can also refrigerate them for a few hours if you prefer them chilled.

Delights

• CHICKEN SHAWARMA •

INGREDIENTS

500g	Chicken thighs, boneless and skinless
3 tbsp	Olive oil
2 tbsp	Lemon juice
1 tbsp	Garlic, minced
1 tsp	Ground cumin
1 tsp	Ground paprika
1 tsp	Ground coriander

Salt and pepper to taste
Pita bread or flatbreads
Fresh veggies (lettuce, tomato, cucumber)
Yogurt tahini sauce (for drizzling)

METHOD

1. In a bowl, mix olive oil, lemon juice, garlic, cumin, paprika, coriander, salt, and pepper. Marinate the chicken for at least 30 minutes.
2. Grill or pan-fry the chicken thighs for 6-8 minutes per side until cooked through and slightly charred.
3. Slice the chicken into strips and serve in pita bread with fresh veggies and a drizzle of yogurt tahini sauce. ■

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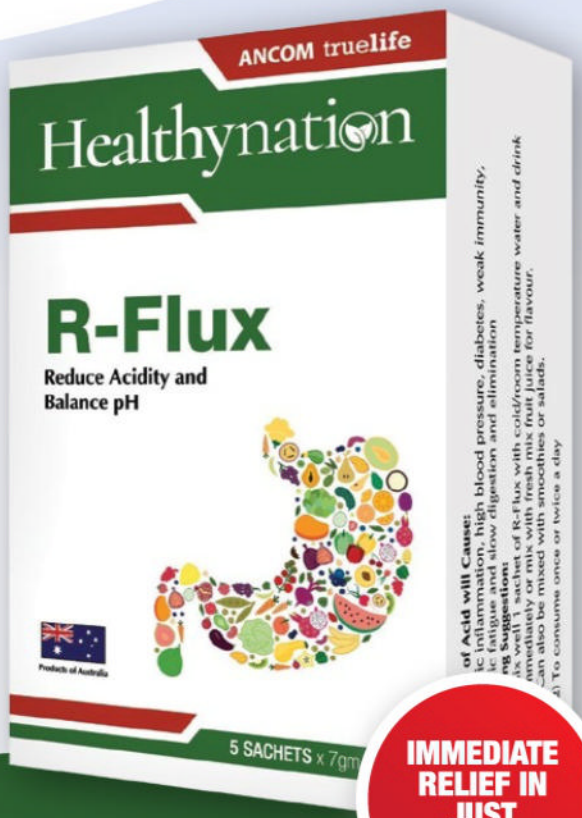

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